

48. Cardigan Island

Gwbert, Ceredigion

Grid References	O.S. Explorer map 198 Cardigan and New Quay. Site centre: SN160515
Status	A notified SSSI which in turn is part of the European Natura 2000 site, the Cardigan Bay Special Area for Conservation (SAC).
Tenure	Leased by the West Wales Field Club from 1944, it was subsequently purchased by the Trust in 1963 with grant aid from WWF.
Size	15.6 ha (38.5 acres).
Location and Access Notes	Access: Restricted. This site can only be accessed by chartered boat from Cardigan or Gwbert. The landing on the north end is only usable in calm weather, and particularly dangerous in northerly winds. Easterlies do not affect it since it is sheltered by the adjacent headland, and it is possible to ferry parties across from there or at Gwbert beach. Please contact the Trust for permission to visit.
Public transport	Not applicable.

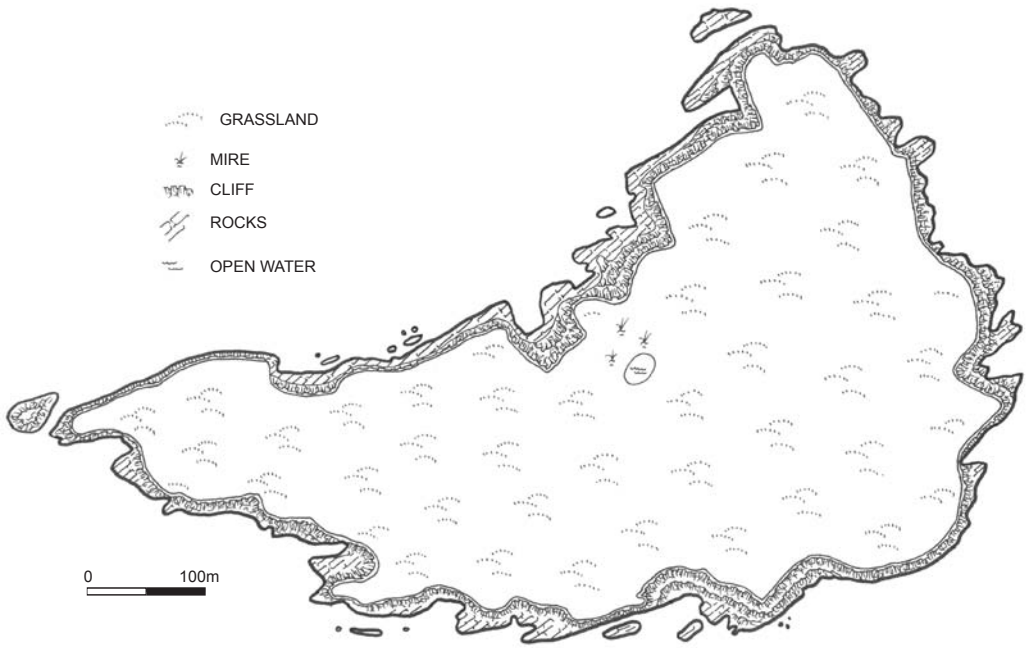
Description: An island consisting of maritime cliff and slope and grassland plateau, adjacent to northern shore of estuary of river Teifi. There are good views from Cemaes Head & Cardigan Island Farm Park.

The island has had a long history of human use; a turf wall encloses the site of an early Christian Cell. The vegetation has altered dramatically since the 1950s, and only small areas of comparable flora remain on the north-west cape. One factor was soil erosion due to an infestation of Brown Rats, which arrived as the result of the wreck of the steamer Herefordshire in 1934. These were eradicated in the late 1960s with aid from MAFF pest officers.

The only other mammals on the island, Soay Sheep, were introduced in 1944 from the Duke of Bedford's flock at Woburn. Numbers have fluctuated in the past but have gone down drastically in recent years, possibly because of genetic problems with inbreeding.

The vegetation can be divided into four communities: almost pure Rye Grass at the western end; more diverse Fescue-Sorrel tussock grassland in the centre with extensive patches of Bluebells (4-6) and Yorkshire Fog, and a richer Fescue grassland at the eastern end; maritime cliff vegetation with Tree Mallow (5-9) to the east, richer vegetation on the northern promontory and adjacent gully with Sea Mayweed (7-8) and Spring Squill (4-5).

The breeding seabird assemblage is dominated by gulls, including an increasing population of Herring Gulls, circa 1400 pairs of Lesser Black-backed Gulls (data from 2004 survey), and up to 20 pairs of Great Black-backed Gulls. Razorbills began to breed in 1982. Other birds breeding include Guillemot, Chough, Fulmar, Shag, Oystercatcher, Raven, and Rock Pipit. Canada and Barnacle Geese also use the island. Grey Seals breed in the sea caves.



Management Objectives: The Soay flock graze the island year round. Seabird numbers are monitored annually.

Good times to visit

- Apr - Sept Coastal flowers
- May - Jul Breeding birds
- Sept - Nov Breeding Grey Seals